

(City Clerk)

To: Public Safety and Welfare

From: Megan Dunneisen

Date: August 20, 2026

Subject: Special Events

PURPOSE

The purpose of this memo is to review the City's current special event permit approval process and discuss the option of returning routine special event permit approvals to an administrative process conducted through the City Clerk's Office, with the Public Safety and Welfare Committee serving as an appeal and escalation body when an event presents significant or unusual concerns.

The intent of this recommendation is not to reduce the City's requirements for special events. Existing application requirements, departmental review, safety requirements, insurance, applicable permits and licenses, and charges for City services would continue to apply.

BACKGROUND

The City's special event ordinance historically provided for an administrative review and approval process. Under the prior version of § 428-7, the City Clerk's Office received the completed application and distributed it to the Police, Fire, Health, Street, and Recreation Departments for review. The relevant City departments were responsible for approving, conditionally approving, or denying the license within 21 calendar days. The City Clerk then issued the license when the application complied with the ordinance.

The prior ordinance also provided an appeal process for an applicant whose license was denied or modified. The applicant could request review by the Licensing Board within five days of the denial or modification.

The ordinance was subsequently amended to require that all special event applications be presented to the Public Safety and Welfare Committee. Under the current ordinance, the City Clerk's Office continues to conduct the initial administrative review and distribute applications to the appropriate City departments and assist departments when needed with obtaining the necessary information concerning the event and its anticipated impacts.

The difference is that final approval now rests with the Public Safety and Welfare Committee. The Committee may approve, conditionally approve, or deny an application and may consider the recommendations and information provided by City departments.

CURRENT PROCESS – ISSUES AND FEEDBACK FROM CITY CLERK STAFF

As part of the review of the City's special event process, discussion was held with Clerk staff who assist with the day-to-day processing and coordination of special event applications. The current process was generally described as functional, particularly for straightforward events. However, several areas were identified where the process could be streamlined.

Departmental Review

The departmental review portion of the process was identified as beneficial and should be retained. Applications are distributed to City departments so they can review the event, identify public safety and operational concerns, plan for any services that may be needed, and determine applicable City charges.

This review allows the departments with direct operational responsibility to provide input before a permit is issued and gives the City an opportunity to identify requirements and costs earlier in the process.

Public Safety and Welfare Committee Review

The primary concern identified is the additional requirement that every special event application proceed to the Public Safety and Welfare Committee for approval after the departmental review has been completed.

For routine and recurring events, this additional step can be duplicative and creates additional administrative work. Most special events are repeat events, and in the experience of the Clerk's Office, special event applications have not been denied through the current process.

This does not suggest that PSW review is unnecessary when an event presents significant concerns. Rather, it raises the question of whether every routine event needs to go through the Committee, or whether Committee review would be more appropriately reserved for events involving significant or unusual concerns, disagreements, policy questions, or appeals.

Late Applications and Timing

Late applications were identified as one of the more significant practical challenges with the current process. When an application is submitted close to the event date, there is limited time for City departments to review the event, identify requirements, determine applicable charges, and complete the necessary coordination.

The additional step of obtaining Committee approval further compresses the timeframe. This can create additional pressure on the Clerk's Office, particularly during the busy times of year.

The concern is not necessarily the Committee review itself, but the effect of adding another required approval step to an already compressed process.

Overall Assessment

The Clerk's Office conclusion does not indicate that the current process is failing. Rather, it indicates that the departmental review component is working well and provides value, while the additional PSW approval step may not be necessary for every routine event.

Returning routine approval to the City Clerk's Office and affected City departments, while referring events with significant or unusual concerns to the Public Safety and Welfare Committee and allowing applicants to appeal an administrative decision to the Committee, would retain the strengths of the current process while reducing an additional administrative step.

EXISTING REQUIREMENTS WOULD REMAIN

Returning routine special event permit approvals to an administrative process would not eliminate or reduce the existing requirements imposed on event organizers.

The City would continue to require all applicable documentation and requirements, including:

- An Emergency Action Plan addressing fire, medical emergencies, severe weather, lost children, crowd control, pedestrian safety, and other emergency situations.
- Required insurance coverage, including a certificate of insurance for events involving alcohol, more than 200 people per day, or a road closure. The current ordinance requires minimum combined single limits of \$1,000,000 per person/aggregate.
- Required indemnification of the City as part of the special event application.
- Required information regarding food vendors, transient merchants, animals, and other event-specific requirements, when applicable.
- Required permits, licenses, maps, approvals, and other supporting documentation.
- Compliance with applicable City ordinances, state laws, and requirements established by the affected City departments.

The City would also continue to identify and charge for extraordinary services associated with the event. The ordinance defines extraordinary services as reasonable and necessary City services resulting specifically from the special event that create measurable costs above normal levels of public health and safety services. Examples include police protection, traffic control, fire

monitoring, dedicated paramedic service, park services, and other services necessary to protect participants and the public.

The City would continue to charge event organizers for applicable City services in accordance with the City's fee schedule and ordinance. The proposed change would not change the City's ability to identify, estimate, document, or collect these costs.

PROPOSED PROCESS

Staff recommends that the City consider amending § 428-7 to establish the following process:

1. Application submitted to the City Clerk's Office.
The City Clerk's Office would continue to receive the application and determine whether it is complete and sufficient for filing.
2. Departmental review.
The Clerk's Office would distribute the application to the appropriate City departments based on the nature and location of the event. Departments would review the event for public safety, fire protection, health, traffic, parks, public works, and other applicable considerations.
3. Safety and documentation requirements.
The event organizer would continue to be required to provide all applicable documentation, including the Emergency Action Plan, insurance certificate, indemnification, maps, vendor information, permits, licenses, and other information required by the ordinance or City departments.
4. Identification of City services and costs.
The affected City departments would identify the City services required for the event, including any extraordinary services. The City would continue to charge the event organizer for applicable City services in accordance with the City's fee schedule and ordinance.
5. Administrative approval.
If the application complies with the ordinance and the affected departments determine that the event can be safely and appropriately accommodated, the City Clerk's Office would issue the special event permit, including any conditions identified through the departmental review.
6. Referral to the Public Safety and Welfare Committee when warranted.
An application could be referred to the Public Safety and Welfare Committee when one or more of the following applies:

- an affected City department recommends denial;
- the event presents significant or unusual public safety, health, welfare, traffic, fire, emergency response, or operational concerns;
- the event requires an unusual or substantial commitment of City resources;
- there is an unresolved disagreement between the applicant and a City department regarding a requirement or condition;
- the event presents a significant conflict with another City event, facility use, road closure, park use, or municipal activity that cannot be resolved administratively;
- the application raises a policy question or requires interpretation of an ordinance provision that is more appropriately addressed by the Committee; or
- the City Clerk determines that Committee review is warranted based on the circumstances of the event.

7. Appeals.

An applicant whose permit is denied or modified through the administrative process could appeal the decision to the Public Safety and Welfare Committee.

8. Committee authority on appeal.

The Public Safety and Welfare Committee could uphold, modify, or overturn the administrative decision and could impose appropriate conditions when warranted.

This structure would allow routine and recurring events that have been reviewed by the appropriate City departments to proceed administratively, while ensuring that events presenting significant or unusual circumstances can still receive Committee review.

BENEFITS OF THE PROPOSED APPROACH

This approach would preserve the Public Safety and Welfare Committee's oversight role while allowing routine applications to move through the City's administrative process without waiting for a Committee meeting.

It would:

- provide applicants with decisions earlier in the process;
- reduce the likelihood of approvals occurring only days before an event;
- provide City departments with more time to coordinate staffing and services;
- allow conditions and requirements to be identified and communicated earlier;

- reduce duplicative review of routine and recurring events;
- reduce the number of routine administrative matters placed on the PSW agenda;
- allow the Committee to focus its time on events that present significant or unusual public safety, policy, or resource issues;
- maintain departmental input regarding City services and charges;
- provide applicants with a clear avenue to challenge an administrative decision; and
- retain Committee oversight when an event presents a disagreement or issue that warrants additional consideration.

IMPORTANT DISTINCTION

This recommendation would not remove the Public Safety and Welfare Committee from the special event process.

Rather, it would change the Committee's role from being the required initial approval authority for every special event to serving as an appeal and escalation body for applications that present significant or unusual concerns or require policy-level consideration.

The existing safety requirements, departmental review, insurance requirements, Emergency Action Plans, indemnification, applicable permits and licenses, and charges for City services would remain in place.

The proposed change is therefore primarily a change in administrative workflow and approval authority, rather than a reduction in the City's oversight or requirements for special events.

RECOMMENDATION

The City Clerk's Office recommends that the Public Safety and Welfare Committee consider recommending an amendment to § 428-7 that would return routine special event permit approval to the City Clerk's Office and affected City departments, with applications involving significant or unusual concerns, unresolved departmental issues, policy questions, or other circumstances warranting Committee review referred to the Public Safety and Welfare Committee.

The Committee would also serve as the appeal body for an applicant whose permit is denied or modified through the administrative process.

This structure would provide a more efficient and timely permitting process while maintaining the City's existing public safety protections, departmental review, financial requirements, and appropriate Public Safety and Welfare Committee oversight of special events that warrant additional review.

2026 Operational Goals

Present a budget that:

1. Create a community where all can feel safe and strive for economic success.
2. Maintain indoor and outdoor recreational facilities to enhance safety, overall health, and quality of life.
3. Serve co-workers and members of the public in a kind and friendly manner to promote employee retention and citizen trust.
4. Encourage community growth by assessing opportunities, involving all stakeholders, environmental needs, modern code and policy priorities.
5. Involve those who are impacted before making decisions.
6. Strengthen employee trust and retention by fostering a workplace culture of respect, service, and responsiveness to internal and community needs.